Correspondence.

ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BUILDER.

"When knaves and fools combined o'er all prevail,
When justice halts, and right begins to fail,
E'en then the boldest start from public snares,
Afraid of shame, unknown to other fears,
More darkly sin, by satire kept in awe,
And shrink from ridicule, though not from law."

BYRON.

SIR,—Architectural competition is, generally speaking, another term for robbing architects, in which the victims are not only fleeced of their brains and their money, but of that which is infinitely of more value, "their time," and I am convinced the period has now arrived for this corrupt practice to be put down; the newspapers teem almost daily with fresh instances, and persons of a respectable station in life do not scruple to lend their names and services to further these disgraceful practices; the clergy, too, are in many instances not a whit more careful to preserve "the unsullied sanctity of their lawn," and principles and precepts that daily emanate from them in their pulpits are sacrificed and set at naught to gratify the wishes of a friend, or to further the worldly prospects of a relative. Churches, schools, town-halls, and public buildings of every description are in the present day subjected to the "competition ordeal," and in nine cases out of every ten it is a known fact (to a favoured few) who is the architect whose design will be selected, and he himself is quite aware of the circumstance; an architect must be devoid of all that is necessary to constitute a true follower of his art, one who looks upon honour and iotegrity but as a fiction, a man, in fact, a thorough disgrace to the profession, and withal an enemy to himself. No man who is possessed of any practice, however limited, will mix himself up in matters of this description, well knowing the character and "*pursuits*" of the men who constitute themselves his judges, and the fearful chance of his drawings, however meritorious, ever having a glance, much less a thought (unless he has friends who can in any way influence the decision) bestowed upon them.

But architects themselves are not to be entirely exonerated; they practise deception upon those who practise fraud upon them. The subject that I allude to is the cost of a building, and I have known designs submitted that would in reality cost three or four times the amount of the limit allowed by the committee, and if one of these designs happen to be selected, which generally is the case, the architect is sure of having abuse heaped upon his head, for either his design when executed costs considerably more than the committee had funds to meet, or else it is altogether unlike and inferior to the "chosen design." Competitions, in fact, are an admirable refuge for the destitute.

I would propose that in future all competitions when advertised should be accompanied with a list of the committee, so that all architects who compete should know the class of men before whom they are to exhibit their talents, and perhaps exposure would in a few cases influence an honest decision. But considerably more than this ought to be done; let the profession coalesce, and form some wholesome rules by which to guide themselves in transactions of this nature; the welfare of the profession is at stake, let those who are enthusiastic in the pursuit of their art turn their attention to this vital point, else architecture will dwindle into paltry insignificance, and architects themselves be made the tools and slaves of men vacant in honour and right mindedness, but vested with the rod of power, before whose nod unprincipled men will bend their knee.

Trusting that these lines will not be deemed an intrusion upon your columns,

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

AN ARCHITECT AND SUBSCRIBER, and
A VICTIM TO INIQUITOUS COMPETITIONS.

London, Nov. 5, 1844.

COMPETITION, READING.

SIR,—In pursuance of an advertisement inserted in your valuable periodical, I applied for particulars relative to the 9¼ acres of land in Reading, and *per* return of post received a lithographic plan and instructions. Having been successfully engaged in designing and carrying out an extensive plan in a fashionable watering-place, my past experience prompted me to request an answer to sundry queries. To my surprise it was stated that the party referred to did not "consider himself at liberty to answer these questions," although they referred to locality, drainage, value of land in the immediate vicinity, &c. It was further added that the proprietor did not feel that justice could be done for him without personal inspection; and the spot being at a distance from my residence, he did not conceive it worth my risking the expense especially as upwards of fifty applications for particulars had been received. Now mark the liberality evinced towards the competitors. A journey is to be made to Reading to inspect the land, and a second to pronounce judgment on the designs which are to be submitted to the several candidates. If uniformity of elevation, or a certain scale of house, is considered desirable, a general plan and elevation with an estimate of cost are to accompany the design. The price to be required for each lot of land is to be stated, also the ground-rent to be reserved for ninety-nine or seventy-five years, if building-leases should be adopted. Any restrictions are to be suggested which it would be advisable to insert in the conveyances, and an opinion is to be given as to the mode of drainage, &c. For the mass of valuable information obtained by the proprietor, the two successful candidates are to be rewarded by the munificent premiums of twenty-five and fifteen guineas (inclusive of their travelling expenses), and the unlucky forty-eight are to rest satisfied with the honour of having assisted the proprietor in his selection of a plan by which he may probably realize a large sum of money. I have not the slightest intention of reflecting on the parties concerned, my wish being merely to shew the inconsiderate manner in which premiums are offered. I leave the matter in your hands, and remain, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
NO COMPETITOR.

Lesmington, Nov. 12, 1844.

ST. THOMAS'S NEW CHURCH, WINCHESTER.

SIR,—From the circumstance of a Mr. Elmslie having met the committee, to receive their opinions and suggestions concerning the plans signed William Webbe, Camden Town, for the new church of St. Thomas, Winchester, I inferred (although it appears incorrectly) that the drawings belonged to Messrs. Elmslie and Co., whose names I have observed in the profession.

It still, however, remains to me (as also, I believe, to many gentlemen on the building committee) a perfect mystery why Mr. Elmslie should be connected with Mr. Webbe's design; and it does not appear that upon this point we are to be enlightened.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
A SURVEYOR AND LOOKER-ON, BUT NO COMPETITOR.

Winchester, Nov. 12, 1844.

WESTMINSTER IMPROVMENTS.

SIR,—Preliminary surveys are now in course of progress for the purpose of ascertaining the best route for a new street direct from Westminster to Pimlico and near to the great western road, as the new line proposed by the Government surveyors does not appear so satisfactory to the inhabitants as they could wish, being in fact only a slight modification of the line known some years since as Rigby Wason's. This line starts from Abingdon-street, and takes a southerly course up to the Vauxhall-bridge-road, so that, in fact, it really leaves all the notorious "*slums*" *of Westminster* quite unscathed. It is true to a certain extent that a pretty good clearance of worthless houses will be made in the neighbourhood of Palmer's Village, through which it is proposed that the new Government line should pass; so far, perhaps, it may be well, as it will enable the commissioners to effect their so-called "improvements" at a trifling expense, when compared to the amount of capital required to perfect the new competing line, as now being surveyed. Messrs. Chawner and Pennethorne, the surveyors to the Woods and Forests, have been for some time past occupied very busily on this matter, principally in ascertaining the value of the property through which the line is to pass; we say *their* line because as the Woods and Forests surveyors, they have a very prominent part to play in it,—but why, I ask, have they or the commissioners thrown the inhabitants of Westminster overboard, as if *their* convenience were of no consequence, or as if the *real* improvement of Westminster were not seriously intended by the Government at all? Is the line intended merely as an accommodation-road for members of Parliament who happen to live south of Vauxhall-bridge-road, for the especial accommodation of the fashionables of Eaton and Belgrave squares, or for the particular gratification of the Marquis of Westminster, whose property in that direction, already so enormously increased in value, will be rendered still more valuable? I repeat the question, why are not the interests and wishes of the inhabitants of Westminster taken into account? Are the "*slums*" *of Westminster* too redolent of filth and dust to receive the visits of the surveyors employed under the Woods and Forests, or are these gentlemen unaware of the mass of poverty, crime, and wretchedness accumulated and still accumulating on the property of the Dean and Chapter?

For some time past there has been much talk and splatter about improving St. Margaret's Church, but I cannot help thinking that it would be a better application of the money if it were used in sweeping away some of the wretched apologies for houses in Maidenhead-court, Jeffries' Buildings, St. Allow's-hill, and Blue Anchor-yard,—why are not these places properly looked after, and improved as they ought to be, or why not, indeed, pulled down altogether, and better places erected in their stead, more suitable for the residence of the labouring classes? If a new road be made in a westerly direction instead of the proposed southerly one, much of the nuisance, now so bitterly annoying to the inhabitants, would be materially abated, and the morals as well as the neighbourhood improved.

Yours most obediently,
J. D.

[We hope soon to see both improvements in progress.—ED.]

CHURCH BELLS.

SIR,—Having seen in No. 90 of THE BUILDER an article, quoted from the *Limerick Chronicle*, stating that cast-steel bars may be obtained which will produce a sound superior to that of small church bells, at about one-fourth the expense, I should feel obliged if you or any one of your numerous correspondents can inform me, through the medium of your valuable journal, first, in what shape they are to be made; secondly, how they are to be fixed, or suspended; and, thirdly, how and with what they are to be struck to produce the sound.

I think a little information on this head might be useful, not only to myself, but to many more of your numerous readers, and if you can furnish it, you will, by doing so, greatly oblige your humble servant and constant reader, CAMPANOLOGIÆ.

Titchmarsh, Nov. 6th, 1844.

TINNED LEAD PIPES.

SIR,—I should feel gratified if any of your correspondents will inform me, through the medium of your increasingly valuable paper, whether there is such an article manufactured as a tinned lead pipe for the use of pumps and other domestic purposes; having been informed that water when remaining long in a lead pipe becomes impregnated with its pernicious qualities and unwholesome. I have also understood that some waters are more capable of receiving these poisonous qualities than others. Can you inform me by what method I can ascertain their peculiar tendency?

I seem inclined to think that the cast-iron flange pipe is far preferable where its use is practicable. A reply to the above inquiries would greatly oblige A SUBSCRIBER.

RESTORATION OF YORK MINSTER.—The committee for superintending the restoration of York Minster have, after more than five years' labour, executed their task, and have in hand a balance, which they recommend the subscribers to permit them to use for the remedying of some defects not attributable to fire, but endangering the security of the building.

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